

PURPOSE:

The Best & Brightest Awards honor outstanding high school seniors in Leon County for excellence in a field of study, service to their schools and the community, leadership and academic success.

WHO'S ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE:

Graduating seniors in accredited High Schools in Leon County are eligible for nomination for the Best & Brightest Awards. The principal of each public and private high school has the opportunity to nominate a student in each of the 15 categories. Schools are not required to nominate a student for every category. Leon County home-schooled students and Leon County Virtual School students can apply through the contacts listed at www.thebestandbrightestawards.com

A student's record of community service is the most important element of the application. Successful applicants will have a strong history of service activities. The Best & Brightest Awards finalists represent those who have consistently contributed to their school and community throughout their high school career.

NOTE: The Best & Brightest Awards coordinators and judges review student high school careers, grades 9 through 12.

CATEGORIES:

The Best & Brightest Awards will select up to three winners in each of these 15 categories:

Art	English & Language Arts	Music
Athletics	Foreign Language	Public Speaking
Business	Journalism & Media Productions	Science & Health
Career/Technical	Leadership	Social Science
Drama & Performing Arts	Mathematics	Technology

Judges will weigh the qualifications of each nominee for the Best & Brightest Awards in three criteria:

- School, Community Service and Leadership: A quality record in the school or community and leadership.
- Achievement in School: Exhibits academic success.
- Personal Interview: All finalists must appear for a personal interview before a panel of judges to discuss the items on their entry form and provide judges with insight into their community and school service, academics and their self-assurance, sincerity and poise.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

1. A student wishing to be recognized by the Best & Brightest Awards must apply through the school's Best & Brightest Awards coordinator, appointed by the principal. *NOTE: Applicants can self-nominate to be considered for selection by the Best & Brightest Coordinator by that school's internal qualifying deadline.*
2. The school's Best & Brightest Coordinator is encouraged to seek qualified applicants, with assistance from teachers, guidance counselors and parents. The coordinator should also structure a committee to recommend eligible students.
3. A student holding a distinguished record of service may apply to become a nominee in more than one category, but the school may only nominate that student in one category, if any. The student must illustrate academic achievement associated with the category, but their school and community service does not have to be specific to a category.

NOMINATION PROCESS:

1. A finalist must submit an application packet which includes a typed original of the entry form and four copies, all three hole-punched. The entry form is accessible online at www.thebestandbrightestawards.com. Attach to each of the five entry forms a photocopied set of any support documents. Support documents can include numerous one-paragraph summaries that inform judges about tournaments, competitions, exhibits, and/or functions in which students participated/excelled. These are limited to ten pages printed front and back.
2. Support documents must include a letter of recommendation with specific information about the finalist's community service (see essay section of the entry form).
3. A color photograph of the finalist, enclosed in an envelope and attached with a paper clip to the original entry form. Photograph must be a 2 ½ x3 ½ inch, head-and-shoulders photo. A photograph of each student is necessary for possible use at awards ceremony. The finalist's name, school and category must be printed on the back of the color photo. Before making photocopies of the entry form, the school's Principals must certify the statements by signing the entry form.
4. The school's finalist is responsible for having a faculty member or school official write a recommendation in the entry form. The school's Principal must certify the statements by signing the entry form.
5. A finalist will be disqualified from consideration for the top awards if they fail to appear for the scheduled interview or other arrangements have been made.

HOW TO APPLY:

Students must apply through their high school Best & Brightest Awards coordinator. Applications are provided by the Best & Brightest Awards coordinator and accessible online, www.thebestandbrightestawards.com.

DEADLINE FOR SCHOOL NOMINATION:

The school's coordinator must personally deliver all the Best & Brightest Awards entries to The Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce office, c/o Laura Rogers, 300 East Park Avenue, Tallahassee, FL, no later than 5 p.m. on February 1, 2018. On the day of the interview on March 3, 2018, finalists may submit an optional, one-page, typed document that summarizes their application. Entries will not be returned, and schools are encouraged to keep a master file of its entries from year to year.

JUDGING ON March 3, 2018:

Volunteer judges chosen by the Best & Brightest Awards will make up an independent panel for each category to review the entry forms and conduct interviews. Judges, chosen for their expertise in particular categories, do not consult judges in other categories before reaching decisions.

Interviews will be held at Cobb Middle School located at 915 Hillcrest Avenue. Because of the difficulty in arranging schedules for all the judges, interviews will be conducted on that one day only. Contact Laura Rogers with any questions regarding interviews. The finalists will be given an opportunity to attend an interview training workshop prior to the March 3rd interview.

AWARDS CEREMONY:

The Best & Brightest Awards ceremony will be on Wednesday, May 16, 2018, 6:30 p.m. at Ruby Diamond Concert Hall. No tickets are required to attend. There will be three award winners in each of the 15 categories: 1st place winner, runner up and honorable mention. All finalists will be recognized at the ceremony, where final award winners will be announced.

AWARDS:

Recipients of The Best & Brightest Awards will receive the following prizes:

Winners: \$1,500 Runners Up: \$750 Honorable Mentions: \$500
All other finalists will receive \$100 in prize scholarships.

SPONSORS:

The Best & Brightest Awards are the result of a partnership with the Leon County Schools, World Class Schools of Leon County and the *Tallahassee Democrat*, with major underwriting by Envision Credit Union and production by Sachs Media Group.

THE BEST & BRIGHTEST AWARDS CATEGORIES:

All finalists should have a track record and proficiency in their selected category. Expertise may be demonstrated by the finalists' participation and concentration in a category.

Art: Applicant may participate in the teaching, inspiration or encouragement of others through the use of visual arts. Applicant may demonstrate creative ability in drawing, painting, sculpture, fabrics, photography, graphic design or any other medium in the visual arts.

Athletics: Applicant may demonstrate physical education or leadership and participation in individual and team sports in the school and community. Applicant may demonstrate leadership and participation in sports not included in a school's athletic program (i.e. archery, crew, etc). Applicant may participate in managing recreation programs, coaching or assisting in athletic activity that contributes to the welfare of others.

Business: Applicant may demonstrate expertise in accounting, entrepreneurial initiatives, data processing, word processing, marketing and distributive education, consumer education, or basic clerical functions such as keyboarding and document processing. Applicant may participate in the application of office technology and business organization for the benefit of the community.

Career/Technical: Applicant may demonstrate high level of valued critical thinking skills and have certification qualifications. Applicant may participate in integrating academics and career/technical education.

Drama & Performing Arts: Applicant may participate in acting, singing, film, video or radio, dancing in theatrical production, or staging and directing such productions. Vocalists not involved in theatrical productions are better suited for the Music category.

English & Language Arts: Applicant may demonstrate leadership in activities related to a fuller understanding of the English language, including an appreciation for reading and writing.

Foreign Language: Applicant may demonstrate expertise by advancing the study of foreign language (or sign language) or using a foreign language (or sign language) as a writer, translator or interpreter. Applicant may participate in the study of any language other than English, even if it is the study of an applicant's native language.

Journalism & Media Production:

Applicant may demonstrate expertise by using writing, editing or reporting skills to benefit others in school, church or civic organizations, or through newspapers, magazines or electronic media in the community. Photographers may be better suited for the Art category, unless their photos are used in news publications. Producers and technicians for television programs should choose the Technology category unless they are involved in news writing and editing. Applicants may attach no more than one edition of the newspaper to accompany the entry form.

Leadership: Applicant may demonstrate expertise and achievement in a diverse and well-rounded range of categories, in addition to general scholastic achievement.

Mathematics: Applicant may demonstrate expertise by contributing to mathematical knowledge through individual or group research, or in mathematics or computer science. Computer programmers are included in the Mathematics category. Computer students in word processing and data processing may be better suited in Business or Career/Technical categories.

Music: Applicant may demonstrate expertise by performing vocal or instrumental music, or by fostering wider participation and appreciation

for music through school, church or civic organizations. Applicant may participate in groups that share musical talents including tutoring younger students and volunteering in schools music programs. An applicant does not have to participate in high school music classes or ensembles, but must document advanced study of an instrument.

Public Speaking: Applicant may demonstrate expertise by debating or publicly speaking about topics that include current events or issues that affect the community. Applicants must provide documentation noting the topic, date, audience size and any other material that provides details of events/speeches.

Science & Health: Applicant may demonstrate expertise by advancing the study of the principles of chemistry, physics, biology, botany, earth and space sciences, physiology, healthcare and medical fields and other scientific areas, or by encouraging study in these areas. Applicant may also participate in promoting the preservation of the environment or working to save an endangered species.

Social Science: Applicant may demonstrate expertise by using knowledge of American and world history, current events, political science, economics, or sociology. Applicant may participate in activities (fundraising or volunteering) related to Student Government as well as local, state and federal government.

Technology: Applicant may demonstrate expertise in computer graphics, computer animation, social media, video knowledge for school or community by using the technical means to influence or improve the community. Applicants may participate in a technological organization, such as extracurricular clubs.